

## Commissioner's Weekly Wrap Up

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DCS Communications Office

January 7, 2005

### The Week Ahead

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**Wed., Jan. 12** –The Commissioner attends the Martin Luther King Children's Conference in Chattanooga.

### Practice What You Preach

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*Submitted by Judy Cole, Executive Director, Office of Regional Support*

Child and Family Team Meetings. We certainly use that phase a lot lately in this Department. Everywhere I go and at almost every meeting I attend, I hear a reference to "CFTM." But what does it really mean? Most folks in the Department know that it is an initiative where we bring together people who are interested and can contribute to a meeting where decisions are made about children and families. But do we "get it"? Do we really understand the philosophy behind the practice? Do we really believe that we cannot single-handedly do this work alone? Do we really allow for meaningful involvement from all participants?

Using the CFTM in practice is about how we do our work with our children, families, foster parents, providers and other community partners. It is about engaging all the players in working together to get the best outcomes for our children and families. It is about building on strengths, focusing on families and being culturally responsive. It is about putting the true power to solve problems in the hands of the people who can solve them. It is about empowering families and communities to fix the problems they face. In other words, child and family team meetings are a philosophy, not an event.

By using the forum of the CFTM, we, as an agency, are saying that we value our partners, whether it is the family, the foster parents, the providers or any other partner, and that we need everyone to participate actively to assist families, children and communities in becoming stronger by building on their existing strengths and identifying resources they need. In doing our work this way, we build a better system of care for children and families – a system where families feel assisted, where foster parents are empowered and where providers feel valued for the work they do. Bringing people together so that, with support, a plan can be created that has the greatest opportunity for success is what we should all be about, and CFTMs provide a way to make this happen. Out of this model grows respect, responsibility and understanding.

How do we spread this philosophy throughout our Department? We do that by practicing this way of working in everything we do. Commissioner Miller recently met with each region about their implementation plan. Each of those meetings took the format of a CFTM. Regions identified their individual strengths and needs, and also identified what each brought to the table and what they wanted to get out of the meeting. This is an example of using the format of a CFTM to do other work of the Department.

I would like each of you to think about how you might use this approach in your work. Can you think of examples of times, not only with families but also in other venues of your work, when this approach might be productive? Are there ways to apply these principles in other pieces of your work life that would add value? Can you think of an opportunity when working together on goals by sharing tasks would help achieve your goal easier or faster? Will you ask yourself “is there a better way?” and will you employ the skills of engagement to your work? Only you can answer these questions.

Social services work relies on intrinsic rewards. We don’t make a lot of money. We often work hours that others sleep. We go to places that others would fear to tread. Our work is not easy. So why do we continue to do it? I believe it’s because we have a workforce of caring people who want to do this work. So I ask you this, “Do you want to be a part of a child welfare agency that is among the best in the country, one that values all its partners and builds strong families and communities?” If you do, you must make a commitment to this new philosophy. Becoming an organization that values and respects staff and all partners only happens when we start believing that there is a better way and we start experiencing success when we “practice what we preach!”

## **Building Families – One Child at a Time**

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*Submitted by Commissioner Viola P. Miller*

Hurrah! Congratulations! Terrific Work! You have met and exceeded our goal for Building Families – One Child at a Time.

Final numbers are not in yet, but we will exceed our goal of 400 adoptions finalized. Think about that ... 400 new “families of choice.” 400 children in “forever” homes. 400 fewer children in your caseloads. 400 children stable without fear of changing houses one more time.

This accomplishment is huge. Everyone played a part, and I am so very proud of each and every one of you who worked hard to make this happen. Take a minute to celebrate. I’ll be around soon with a “lard cake.”

We still have over 2,500 children waiting for “forever” families. 2,500 children who do not have stable homes. Many of these children are still young, but have been in care well over the limit of 15 of the past 24 months. We must not forget, even as we celebrate our success that there are still far too many waiting children.

Now that you know you can do it, why not set a monthly goal for yourself? Look over the next month ... and the next ... and the next. Identify children for each month as your “adoption target.” Then go for it.

If you accept this suggestion, let me know. I would love to see the spirit of Building Families continue. Let me know if I can help. There isn't much I wouldn't do to continue to Build Families – One Child at a Time.

## **Continuous Quality Improvement**

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*Submitted by Semetta Pulley, Director 1, QA/CQI Division, Office of Performance Enhancement*

Today many leaders seek to achieve the commitment and focus that come with genuinely shared visions. Unfortunately, too many people still think that “vision” is the top leader's job. Individual leaders' visions may succeed in carrying an organization through a crisis, but as Vaclav Havel recognized, there is a deeper challenge – creating a sense of purpose that binds people together and propels them to fulfill their deepest aspirations. Catalyzing people's aspirations doesn't happen by accident; it requires time, care and strategy. Thus, the discipline of building shared vision is centered around a never-ending process, whereby teams and groups of people in an organization articulate their common visions, purposes, ideas, values and work to fit them into the big picture for the organization.

Shared visions are a vehicle for building shared meaning – a deep purpose that expresses the organization's reason for existence. Not all visions are equal. To be genuinely shared, such visions must emerge from many people – all team members reflecting on the organization's purpose and on how to meet the goals or achieve the most positive and productive results. This shared sense of purpose is often tacit – obscured by conventional day-to-day practices, the prevailing organizational culture and the barriers of the organization's structure.

At DCS, all employees are a member of a CQI team and all members' ideas and opinions are equal and valued. Thus, the heart of building shared vision is the task of designing and evolving ongoing processes in which people at every level of the organization, in every role, can speak from the heart about what really matters to them and be heard by senior management and each other. The quality of this process (CQI), especially the amount of openness and genuine caring, determines the quality and power of the results. The content of a true shared vision cannot be dictated; it can only emerge from a coherent process of reflection, conversation and results.

When members at any level have an opportunity to actively consider what vision and purpose have real meaning for them, everything changes. Team members will often suggest joint sessions with other teams to share visions and develop action plans that they can implement together. As this process is repeated among many teams and multiple

pairings, the whole organization is engaged and enriched, and multiple strands of shared meaning begin to bind the organization together.

## **Core Leadership**

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### **CORE Leadership Meeting Bonnie Hommrich, Presiding January 4, 2004**

#### **New Year's Resolution**

Within the next two weeks, the Core Leadership team will set goals for the next three, six, nine and 12 months. These goals should be cumulative and be for each member's respective division. The goals should collectively draw a road map for the next 12 months. These goals will be shared at upcoming Core Leadership meetings.

#### **Commissioner's Goals**

The Commissioner will be putting lots of time and energy into "quality clinical practice." The infrastructure pieces are better defined and are reflected in the Path to Excellence. Not all of the infrastructure pieces are in place yet. We want to be caseworkers instead of case managers.

The next area of focus will be on COA. The goal is to get this set up by mid-March. Brenda Bell was set to be the lead, but she has become immersed in MR transitions. We need to rethink the management team for COA, initial pieces are self-study, but many areas fall under Tom Riche and can be started with Personnel and Fiscal.

The Commissioner will also focus on reintegrating in home services into our agency. We need to reintegrate direct service components.

#### **Commissioner Update**

The strategic plan started last year, but we weren't ready as an agency. This is a four- to five-year-long plan on which the agency must focus. Drafting the plan will take approximately six to 12 months to complete. Lane Simpson and Eric Henderson have been trained in strategic planning, so the Core Leadership has additional support in place.

#### **Feb. Retreat**

There is a reading assignment from Fahlberg's book, *A Child's Journey Through Placement*. Lane Simpson will email the chapters to Core Leadership. The Commissioner is asking the regions to bring representatives of their core implementation teams. The retreat will be held at a state park in the East region.

## **Training**

Over the next 18 months, the Department must retrain every case manager in new recertification program. The recertification program has a heavy emphasis on clinical skills and on the job training. The new training model is more focused heavily on clinical engagement skills rather than process procedure.

## **CQI**

Daryl Chansuthus asked the Core Leadership Team to think about who should serve on the state CQI team. Chansuthus wants director-level staff, program coordinators and Core Leadership staff represented. Suggestions from CLT were to include field staff, partnerships for FCA and those familiar with COA. Suggestions about members to include on the state CQI team should be e-mailed to [Daryl.Chansuthus@state.tn.us](mailto:Daryl.Chansuthus@state.tn.us).

The first meeting is tentatively scheduled to occur before the end of the first quarter. The core (Central Office and field staff) team would meet once a month for half a day. The full team would meet once per quarter for half a day.

## **Needs Assessment**

The implementation plan is due to TAC tomorrow and to the plaintiffs on January 18/ A CQI mechanism is being put in place to make these regional implementation decisions, evaluate them, and re-plan. Regions will include dollar amounts into their regional plans.

## **Meth**

The Office of Communications has been receiving media inquiries about meth, including statistics and figures. Key issues are the number of children entering custody because of meth-related issues and the number of meth-related referrals received. The Department must consistently and uniformly track meth data and make reports available for such purposes.

The Commissioner suggested that Denise Alexander send CPS reminders that the meth field exists in TNKids and should be used when appropriate. Whether or not entry into this field should be mandatory in TNKids will be further explored.



***Become the change you want to see – those are the words I live by.***

-Oprah Winfrey

***My future starts when I wake up every morning ... Every day I find something creative to do with my life.***

-Miles Davis